



PANDEMIC FLU (H1N1) Flu Frequently Asked Questions

What are the symptoms of H1N1 flu?

The symptoms of H1N1 flu include the sudden start of fever with a cough and/or sore throat and body aches. Other symptoms include lack of energy and appetite, headache, fatigue, runny or stuffy nose, and, in some people, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. Most people recover without medical treatment.

How severe is H1N1 flu?

So far H1N1 flu virus has been similar to the seasonal flu we see each year. Most people recover without medical attention. Common seasonal flu can cause mild to severe illness and sometimes leads to death. Each year in the United States, about 36,000 people die from flu-related complications and more than 200,000 people are hospitalized. Some people are more likely to become very ill if they catch the H1N1 flu virus: children under age 5, pregnant women, and people of any age with chronic medical conditions, such as asthma, heart or lung problems or diabetes. If you or your child has a serious medical condition, ask your doctor or clinic how to stay healthy in flu season.

Influenza is unpredictable and viruses change. Health officials encourage everyone to get a seasonal flu vaccine annually.

What should I do if I am sick?

Most people with influenza recover at home. They need plenty of rest and should drink clear fluids and take over-the-counter pain relievers to reduce fever and body aches.

If you are pregnant or have a health condition such as diabetes, heart disease, asthma, or emphysema, check with your doctor about special care you may need. If your symptoms are severe or quickly worsen, seek medical attention.

Health experts recommend that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others. You should stay home until symptoms are gone and you've had no fever for at least 24 hours without the aid of fever-reducing medication.

Seek emergency help for children if they're having trouble breathing, not drinking enough liquids, vomiting severely, not waking up or interacting, irritable or their symptoms return after improving.

Seek medical help for adults if they're having trouble breathing, having chest or abdominal pains, experiencing dizziness or confusion, vomiting or their symptoms return after improving.

What should I do if my child has flu symptoms?

- Keep him/her home from school and other public places, including child care, church and stores.
- Notify your child's school that he/she has flu-like symptoms.
- Use the same judgment about taking your child to the doctor as you do during seasonal flu. If you do choose to see a doctor, call first.
- Keep your child home from school and child care until the symptoms are gone and he or she has had no fever for at least 24 hours without the aid of fever-reducing medication.
- Don't give your child aspirin or any medication that contains aspirin.

How can my family and I prevent catching H1N1 flu?

- Wash your hands frequently or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer and teach your family to do the same
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with tissues or cough into the inside of your elbow or sleeve. After blowing your nose or coughing into a tissue, properly dispose of the tissue. Then, make sure to wash your hands.
- Don't share food, utensils or beverages with others.
- Avoid touching your nose, mouth, and eyes and keep your hands away from your face because that's how viruses get into your body.
- Stay about six feet away from someone who has a respiratory infection when possible. People can be infectious for seven days from the start of symptoms.
- Get plenty of sleep, exercise regularly, and eat a healthy diet.

How does H1N1 flu spread?

Flu viruses spread easily from person to person through coughing or sneezing. The H1N1 flu virus can become airborne if you cough or sneeze without covering your nose and mouth. The virus spreads through contact with an infected person or by touching an object contaminated with germs from an infected person and then touching your eyes, mouth or nose.

A person infected with H1N1 can infect others from the day before symptoms start to five to seven days after.

Will the seasonal flu shot protect me from the H1N1 pandemic flu?

No. The virus that causes the seasonal flu is different from the H1N1 flu virus. The vaccine against the seasonal flu won't protect against H1N1 and the vaccine for H1N1 won't protect against the seasonal flu. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention strongly advises that you get your seasonal flu vaccination and the H1N1 vaccination when it's available if you're in a priority group. Priority groups include:

- Pregnant women.
- People who live with or care for children younger than 6 months old.
- Emergency medical and healthcare workers.
- People between the ages of 6 months through 24 years.
- People ages 25 through 64 with health problems such as asthma, diabetes, cancer, etc.

What do I do if my child's school closes because of pandemic flu?

Federal officials are recommending schools stay open and focus on infection prevention methods: washing hands, staying home when sick, etc. But a backup plan for child care is wise. Talk to your employer about the sick leave policy and alternate work plans. Can you work from home if you need to care for your child?

Talk to your neighbors about rotating sick and well child care responsibilities. A household with no illness and a flexible work schedule may care for well children when the school is closed. A parent home with one sick child may care for others in the neighborhood so parents with less flexible work schedules can work. Have plans ready if needed.

The Panhandle Health District provides H1N1 information and updates of the situation in the five northern counties on its website: www.phd1.idaho.gov. PHD's hotline number is (208) 415-5199 or tollfree (866) 528-3501. PHD will announce when the hotline is activated.